

Kenny Loggins with Contemporary Youth Orchestra at Severance (May 21)

by Alice Koeninger



Kenny Loggins and the Contemporary Youth Orchestra brought rock and roll to Severance Hall on Monday, May 21. Conducted by Liza Grossman, the CYO's forces included two drum sets and a large chorus with backup vocalists for this retrospective of Loggins' music. The sound was remarkable.

Standing in front of the orchestra with his guitarist, Scott Bernard, Loggins sent his clear, strong voice ringing out into the silver hall. His enthusiasm was contagious as he launched into *Heart to Heart*, the first in the thirteen-song program plus two encores. The orchestra filled in musical textures while Loggins sang and Bernard riffed on the vocal melody. Some balance issues between the soloists and the large ensembles evened out as the concert progressed.

Balance is also key when it comes to entertainment, something Loggins clearly understands — he alternated comedy with serious personal stories between songs. Introducing *This is It*, he told the audience that he wrote the lyrics not knowing exactly what they referred to until his father was about to have surgery — then he lightened the moment with a reference to the Cavs and Celtics in the NBA Playoffs. He continued to bond with the audience throughout the concert by telling stories — like when he found out he was dating the daughter of Disney's CEO when he told her he was having trouble securing the rights to record *Return to Pooh Corner*.

Family was another theme of the concert. That's not surprising with a youth orchestra, but it was still remarkable to see parents dancing and singing along to songs they love while their children were playing them. On top of that, Loggins had his youngest daughter, Hana Aluna Loggins, join him for *Conviction of the Heart*. They showed obvious skill as their voices reached great heights, and their duet was emotional to say the least. Vocalist Kasia Bufford joined them with her strong, rich voice during *That's When I Find You/If I Believe*, giving the show an energy that carried through to the encores.

Many talented young soloists were featured throughout the concert, and Kenny Loggins was clearly impressed by each of them, including vocalist J. Archer Frodyma (above) in *Whenever I Call You Friend*, oboist Kate Young in *For the First Time*, drummer Chris Carmon in *I'm All Right*, and the Tri-C Vocal Arts a cappella group in *Sweet Reunion*. The first encore, *Mama Don't Dance*, had the audience on their feet, and showcased not one but three improvised solos by violinist Aidan Scheuer, clarinetist Miron Gotfryd, and trumpeter Andrew Gerace. Each new musician added a new element, making it a truly collaborative effort between Loggins and the orchestra.



It was clear that Loggins was honored and excited to be there. At one point he said, “I might be having too much fun.” While some of Stefan Podell’s arrangements emphasized the vocals and guitar, others blended the entire ensemble and filled the hall with swells of music. It was truly an enjoyable night for the entire family.

Photos by Amber Patrick (top) & Robert Mueller.

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